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during the
holidays

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Aruba's ONLY English newspaper

COVID-19 variant disrupts holiday travel but not shopping

By **BRYAN GALLION and PAUL WISEMAN**
Associated Press

NEWARK, N.J. (AP) — The latest COVID-19 variant is upending holiday plans for tens of thousands of travelers — but it didn't do much damage to holiday shopping.

Airlines canceled hundreds more flights Sunday, citing staffing problems tied to COVID-19, as the nation's travel woes extended beyond Christmas, with no clear indication when normal schedules would resume.

But shoppers shrugged off the omicron variant, and holiday sales rose at the fastest pace in 17 years, according to one spending measure.

Omicron is likely to slow the economy's unexpectedly

strong rebound from last year's coronavirus recession by disrupting travel and discouraging some consumers from venturing out.

The variant could also add more heat to already simmering inflation by forcing shutdowns at factories and ports, delaying shipments and driving up prices.

"A full reopening of the U.S. economy will be delayed yet again," said Robin Brooks, chief economist at the Institute of International Finance, a trade group of financial firms. But it's not yet clear how deep the hurt will go or how long it will last.

For now, the variant is playing havoc with travel. More than 700 flights entering, leaving or flying within the U.S. were



A shopper shops at a retail store in Glenview, Ill., Thursday, Dec. 16, 2021.

Associated Press

called off, according to the flight-tracking website FlightAware. That figure was

down from nearly 1,000 on Saturday. More than 50 flights were already can-

celed for Monday.

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LIVE ENTERTAINMENT 7 DAYS A WEEK

SUNDAY: TICO KOCK STEEL DRUM 4 - 6pm	MONDAY: ANGELA FLORES VIOLINIST 6:30 - 8:30pm	TUESDAY: JEAN PAUL SAXOPHONIST 6:30 - 8:30pm	WEDNESDAY: PAULA RIDERSTAP SINGER 6:30 - 8:30pm	THURSDAY: RICKY THOMAS GUITAR 7 - 9pm	FRIDAY: RICKY THOMAS GUITAR 7 - 9pm	SATURDAY: ANGELA FLORES VIOLINIST 6:30 - 8:30pm
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COVID-19 variant disrupts holiday travel but not shopping

Continued from Front

Delta, United, JetBlue and American have blamed omicron for staffing shortages that forced cancellations.

"This was unexpected," United spokesperson Mad-die King said of the variant's effect on staffing.

Globally, airlines scrapped about 2,200 flights as of Sunday morning, down from more than 2,800 cancellations the day before, Flight-Aware's data showed. The site does not say why flights were canceled.

JetBlue scrapped 10% of its flights Sunday. Delta canceled 5% and United canceled 4%, according to FlightAware. The three airlines canceled more than 10% of their scheduled



A family, wearing matching pajama bottoms, walks through Terminal A at Orlando International Airport on Christmas Day, Saturday, Dec. 25, 2021, in Orlando, Fla.

Associated Press

just live with" the virus, he said.

Despite omicron, American consumers appeared undaunted. Mastercard Spending Pulse, which tracks all kinds of payments, including cash and debit cards, reported Sunday that holiday sales had risen 8.5% from a year earlier, the biggest annual gain in 17 years. Mastercard SpendingPulse had expected a 7.4% increase. The results, which covered Nov. 1 through Dec. 24, were fueled by purchases of clothing and jewelry. Holiday sales were up 10.7% compared with the pre-pandemic 2019 holiday period.

After omicron hit, some consumers shifted their spending to e-commerce, but sales stayed strong.

"I feel really good about how the season played out," said Steve Sadove, senior adviser to Mastercard and former CEO of Saks Inc. "When people feel a little bit uncomfortable, you'll see a little bit of a pickup in online and a little bit of a slowdown in store performance."

Sadove said consumers are "learning to live" with what COVID-19 throws at them. "You're coming out of 2021 with quite a bit of consumer momentum," he said.

Also Sunday, the nation's top infectious disease doctor acknowledged that he was frustrated with the limited supply of COVID-19 tests. Demand for tests has risen amid the omicron surge. "We've obviously got to do better," Dr. Anthony Fauci said in an interview that aired Sunday on ABC's "This Week."

"I think things will improve greatly as we get into January, but that doesn't help us today and tomorrow," Fauci said.

Fauci said he was pleased with evidence that omicron causes less severe illness for most people. But he warned against complacency because the rapid spread of the disease could "override a real diminution in severity," because so many more people could get infected. □

flights on Saturday.

Mason Herlocker waited Sunday at Newark Liberty International Airport in New Jersey to pick up his girlfriend, who was coming in from Paris. Her flight was delayed for four hours.

It took her five hours to get a COVID-19 test the day before to enter the U.S. She's visiting for three weeks, and Herlocker said he fears that she will get stuck here if she doesn't have a negative test result before trying to return home to France.

Worried about his parents getting sick, Herlocker recently got a booster shot and encouraged others to get theirs, too. He said he doesn't believe an end to the pandemic is in sight.

"I'm of the opinion that this is the new normal," Herlocker said. "I don't foresee (the virus) going away any time soon." Neither of his flights was delayed or canceled, but he said news of the omicron variant encouraged him to push up his travels to ensure he could get to his destination. He said face masks and vaccines are likely to become ingrained in everyday life for the foreseeable future.

"I don't think we have much to worry about if we take all the precautions, and I think we will be entering a situation where we

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Federal program offers cash to cover COVID-19 funeral costs

By STEVE LeBLANC

Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — When Wanda Olson's son-in-law died in March after contracting COVID-19, she and her daughter had to grapple with more than just their sudden grief. They had to come up with money for a cremation.

Even without a funeral, the bill came to nearly \$2,000, a hefty sum that Olson initially covered. She and her daughter then learned of a federal program that reimburses families up to \$9,000 for funeral costs for loved ones who died of COVID-19.

Olson's daughter submitted an application to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, received a deposit by June and was able to reimburse her mother the \$1,974.

"Had this not been available, we would have been paying the money ourselves," said Olson, 80, of Villa Rica, Georgia. "There wasn't any red tape. This was a very easy, well-handled process."

As of Dec. 6, about 226,000 people had shared in the nearly \$1.5 billion that FEMA has spent on funeral costs that occurred after Jan. 20, 2020, the date of the first confirmed case of COVID-19 in the U.S. With the nation's coronavirus death toll topping 800,000, it's clear



Wanda Olson poses for a photo, Friday, Dec. 17, 2021, in Villa Rica, Ga.

that many families who are eligible for reimbursement have yet to take advantage of the funeral benefit. Her son-in-law was traveling a lot, working on air conditioning systems in theaters, restaurants and businesses, when he began feeling ill, Olson said. After a few days at home, he went to the hospital and was put on a ventilator. He died several weeks later.

"He could never overcome it," she said.

To be eligible for reimbursement, death certificates for those who died after May 16, 2020, must indicate that the death was attributed to

COVID-19.

For deaths that occurred in the early months of the pandemic — from Jan. 20 to May 16, 2020 — death certificates must be accompanied with a signed statement from a medical examiner, coroner or the certifying official listed on the certificate indicating that COVID-19 was the cause or a contributing cause of death.

The percentage of individuals who have been reimbursed varies dramatically from state to state — from nearly 40% in North Carolina and Maryland to fewer than 15% in Idaho and Or-

egon, according to state-by-state data compiled by FEMA.

While the reimbursement must go directly to individuals, some funeral directors have taken on the task of informing grieving families of the benefit.

After the benefit was first announced, David Shipper, owner of the Sunset Funeral Home, Cremation Center & Cemetery in Evansville, Indiana, took out ads to let people know that help was available if they qualified.

"Nine thousand dollars — that's a lot of money. We wanted to find a way to tell people about it," he said.

"We stopped advertising some time ago, but when we have a new family with a death from COVID, we tell them about the program."

Workers at the home will sit down with families, gather the needed paperwork, contact FEMA on the phone and help walk them through the process if they ask, he said.

Many families may simply be unaware of the benefit, but others may opt against seeking the cash out of reluctance to revisit the pain of the death, Shipper said. He said the better time to seek the help is when planning the funeral.

"They're much more likely to take advantage right then than if they've already spent the money and don't want to open it up again," Shipper said.

The largest states account for some of the biggest shares of the FEMA reimbursement money.

The program has paid out more than 21,000 reimbursements in California and Texas, which have both reported more than 74,000 COVID-19 deaths. Residents applied for more than \$141 million in each state.

The fewest number of reimbursements have occurred in Vermont, where 123 people were awarded a total of about \$704,000. □

Associated Press

Washington crossing the Delaware: Reenactment is revived

WASHINGTON CROSSING, Pa. (AP) — Hundreds gathered on both sides of the Delaware River to watch an annual Christmas Day reenactment of George Washington's 1776 crossing, a year after pandemic restrictions forced viewers to watch it online.

Reenactors in three boats completed the crossing in about an hour Saturday afternoon under overcast skies but in fairly mild temperatures, a spokesperson for Washington Crossing Historic Park said. Earlier in the month, about 5,000 people attended a

dress rehearsal of the Revolutionary War reenactment amid good weather and good water conditions, volunteer Tom Maddock of the Friends of Washington Crossing Park said, calling it "a great day."

In 2020, after crowd-size restrictions barred holding the traditional in-person event, park officials posted a video of a reenactment filmed earlier in the month providing what they called a "close-up view." This year, people entering the visitor center were asked to wear masks, and workers were also masked, officials

said.

In years past, thousands have often gathered every Christmas morning on the banks of the river in Washington Crossing, Pennsylvania, and Titusville, New Jersey, to watch historical reenactors set out in boats to retrace the daring 1776 voyage of Washington and his troops.

In 2019, the crossing was completed for the first time in three years with what the Friends of Washington Crossing Park said was probably a record crowd of 4,500 to 5,000 people looking on. The crossing



John Godzieba, as Gen. George Washington, second right, stands in a boat during a re-enactment of Washington's daring Christmas 1776 crossing of the Delaware River in Washington Crossing, Pa., on Dec. 25, 2016.

Associated Press

had been scuttled during the previous two years, first by high winds and then by high water.

Other activities at the annual event include reen-

actments of Washington's address to his troops, historical speeches and processions, and staffers in period clothing providing public interpretation. □

Parts of California get a White Christmas after snowfall

By STEFANIE DAZIO

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Parts of California are getting a White Christmas after all, with snowfall pounding mountains across the state. Other areas of California, however, saw a wet and rainy Christmas as storms continue to drench the state, causing flash flooding and evacuations in some areas over the holiday period.

A 70-mile (113-kilometer) stretch of interstate over the top of the Sierra Nevada was closed Saturday when a storm that dropped nearly 2 feet (60 centimeters) of snow on some ski resorts around Lake Tahoe overnight got a second wind. Interstate 80 connecting Reno, Nevada, to Sacramento, California, over the Sierra was closed in both directions due to poor visibility from the Nevada-California state line to Colfax, California.

"The worst part of the storm is here so expect long delays," the California Highway Patrol in Truckee tweeted Saturday afternoon.

Friday night into Saturday, 20 inches (50 centimeters) of snow fell at Homewood on Tahoe's west shore. About a foot (30 centimeters) was reported at Northstar near Truckee, California and 10 inches (25 centimeters) at the Mount Rose ski resort on the southwest



In this image taken from video from a Caltrans remote video traffic camera, traffic is stopped along a snow covered Interstate 80 at Donner Summit, Calif., on Thursday, Dec. 23, 2021.

Associated Press

edge of Reno.

At Donner Pass in the Sierra, which is along the closed interstate, officials with the University of California, Berkeley's Central Sierra Snow Laboratory wondered on Twitter if the recent snowfall could break the snowiest December record of 179 inches (4.6 meters) set in 1970.

There's been at least 119 inches (3 meters) recorded so far this month, according to The Mercury News, with more expected over the next 72 hours.

The snowpack in the Sierra was at dangerously low levels after recent weeks of dry weather but the state

Department of Water Resources reported on Christmas Eve that the snowpack was between 114% and 137% of normal across the range with more snow expected.

In the San Bernardino National Forest, crews are working on a \$4.2 million emergency project to repair a section of State Route 18 that washed down a hillside late Thursday after heavy rain, according to The San Bernardino Sun.

The roadway is a major route to Big Bear Lake and the closure near Panorama Point could be "several days if not weeks," the newspaper reported.

The Los Angeles area is likely to see rain and mountain snow for the next week, according to the National Weather Service, with temperatures significantly below normal through the middle of the week.

The San Diego region should see scattered showers, with heavy snow in the San Bernardino and Riverside County mountains, with precipitation possibly going into Thursday.

Meanwhile, the San Francisco Bay Area is predicted to have rain showers through Monday before cold and drier conditions arrive through the middle of next week, the weather

service said. The storms across the West, which could drop rain and snow over much of the region into next week and plunge the Pacific Northwest into a lengthy cold snap, follow a now-departed atmospheric river that delivered copious amounts of precipitation earlier this week.

The National Weather Service says the Seattle-Tacoma area is likely to see up to 3 inches (7.6 centimeters) of snow over the weekend. By early next week, the Seattle area will dip as low as 18 degrees Fahrenheit (-7.7 degrees Celsius), the lowest in several years. Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, will drop to -5 F (-20 C) by Wednesday and Portland will drop to the low 20s and high teens. Rain and snow records broke in Nevada and state officials in Oregon declared an emergency ahead of the freezing temperatures, snow and ice.

Recent forecasts show at least an inch of snow is likely to fall Sunday in the Seattle and Portland regions, which don't typically see snow.

But forecasters and state officials say the main concern is cold temperatures in the region, with daytime highs next week struggling to reach above freezing, that are likely to impact people experiencing homelessness and those without adequate access to heating. □



This photo combo shows from top left, Kaleb Franks, Brandon Caserta, Adam Dean Fox, and bottom left, Daniel Harris, Barry Croft, and Ty Garbin.

Associated Press

Whitmer kidnapping plot defense seeks to dismiss indictment

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich.

(AP) — Defense attorneys want to dismiss the indictment against five men accused of plotting to kidnap Gov. Gretchen Whitmer because of what they described as "egregious overreaching" by federal agents and informants, according to a court filing.

In the 20-page motion, which was filed Saturday night, defense attorneys allege FBI agents and federal prosecutors invented a conspiracy and entrapped people who could face

up to life in prison. They're asking U.S. District Judge Robert Jonker to dismiss the conspiracy charge, which would effectively knock down the federal government's case and other connected charges, according to The Detroit News. The request comes after developments and claims about the government's team, including the conviction of Richard Trask, an FBI special agent who was arrested on a domestic violence charge and later fired and convicted of

a misdemeanor.

"Essentially, the evidence here demonstrates egregious overreaching by the government's agents, and by the informants those agents handled," defense attorneys wrote. Five people are charged with kidnapping conspiracy and face a trial March 8 in Grand Rapids. They have pleaded not guilty and claim to be victims of entrapment.

Federal prosecutors have argued the men were not entrapped. □

Putin to mull options if West refuses guarantees on Ukraine

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV

Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin said Sunday he would ponder a slew of options if the West fails to meet his push for security guarantees precluding NATO's expansion to Ukraine.

Earlier this month, Moscow submitted draft security documents demanding that NATO deny membership to Ukraine and other former Soviet countries and roll back its military deployments in Central and Eastern Europe.

The Kremlin presented its security demand amid tensions over a Russian troop buildup near Ukraine in recent weeks that has fueled Western fears of a possible invasion. U.S. President Joe Biden warned Putin in a video call earlier this month that Russia will face "severe consequences" if it attacks Ukraine.

Russia has denied an intention of launching an invasion and, in its turn, accused Ukraine of hatching plans to try to reclaim control of the territories held by Moscow-backed rebels by force. Ukraine has rejected the claim. Putin has urged the West to move quickly to meet his demands, warning that Moscow will have to take "adequate military-technical measures" if the West continues its "aggressive" course "on the threshold of our home."



Russian President Vladimir Putin attends a cabinet meeting via video conference at the Novo-Ogaryovo residence outside Moscow, Russia, Friday, Dec. 24, 2021.

Asked to specify what such Moscow's response could be, he said in comments aired by Russian state TV Sunday that "it could be diverse," adding that "it will depend on what proposals our military experts submit to me."

The U.S. and its allies have refused to offer Russia the kind of guarantee on Ukraine that Putin wants, citing NATO's principle that membership is open to any qualifying country. They agreed, however, to launch security talks with Russia next month to discuss its concerns.

Putin said the talks with the U.S. will be held in Ge-

neva. In parallel, negotiations are also set to be held between Russia and NATO and broader discussions are expected under the aegis of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

In remarks broadcast Sunday, Putin said Russia submitted the demands in the hope of a constructive answer from the West.

"We didn't do it just to see it blocked ... but for the purpose of reaching a negotiated diplomatic result that would be fixed in legally binding documents," Putin said. He reaffirmed that NATO membership for Ukraine or the deployment

of alliance weapons there is a red line for Moscow that it wouldn't allow the West to cross.

"We have nowhere to retreat," he said, adding that NATO could deploy missiles in Ukraine that would take just four or five minutes to reach Moscow. "They have pushed us to a line that we can't cross. They have taken it to the point where we simply must tell them; 'Stop!'"

He noted that Russia published its security demands to make them known to the public and raise the pressure on the U.S. and its allies to negotiate a security deal. Putin's spokes-

man Dmitry Peskov said in remarks broadcast Sunday that NATO's expansion to Ukraine or other ex-Soviet nations is "a matter of life or death for us."

He noted that Friday's test-firing of Russia's Zircon hypersonic missiles would help make Russia's push for security guarantees "more convincing."

Friday's launches were the latest in a series of test of Zircon, which Putin said is capable of flying at nine times the speed of sound to a range of more than 1,000 kilometers (620 miles). They marked the first time Zircon missiles were launched in a salvo, indicating the completion of tests before the new missile enters service with the Russian navy next year and arms its cruisers, frigates and submarines.

Peskov on Sunday also pointed at Putin's earlier warning that a Ukrainian offensive against the rebel-held territories would entail "grave consequences" for Ukraine's statehood, adding that "they know it well in Kyiv and they know it well in Washington."

Russia annexed Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula in 2014 and shortly after threw its support behind a separatist rebellion in the country's east. Over more than seven years, the fighting has killed over 14,000 people and devastated Ukraine's industrial heartland, known as the Donbas. □

Israel plans to double settlement in Golan Heights

MEVO HAMA, Golan Heights (AP)

— Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said Sunday the country intends to double the amount of settlers living in the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights with a multimillion-dollar plan meant to further consolidate Israel's hold on the territory it captured from Syria more than five decades ago.

Bennett said the new investment in the region was prompted by the Trump administration's recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the

swath of land and by the Biden administration's indication that it will not soon challenge that decision.

"This is our moment. This is the moment of the Golan Heights," Bennett said at a special Cabinet meeting in the Golan Heights. "After long and static years in terms of the scope of settlement, our goal today is to double settlement in the Golan Heights."

Bennett's office said the government would invest some 1 billion shekels (over \$300 million) into develop-

ing the Golan, including the establishment of two new settlements as well as investments in tourism, industry, clean energy and technology that would create several thousand jobs. Entrenching Israeli control over the territory would complicate any future attempt to forge peace with Syria, which claims the Golan Heights. Israel captured the Golan Heights in the 1967 Mideast war and later annexed the territory, promoting settlement and agriculture there as well



Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, center, speaks at the weekly cabinet meeting in Kibbutz Mevo Hama, in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, Sunday, Dec. 26, 2021.

Associated Press

as creating a thriving local tourism industry. The U.S. was the first country to recognize Israel's sovereignty

over the Golan, which the rest of the international community regards as Israeli-occupied. □

Save the Children says staff missing after Myanmar massacre

By TASSANEE VEJPONGSA

Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — The international aid group Save the Children said two of its staffers were missing in a massacre in eastern Myanmar that left more than 30 people, including women and children, dead and burned in their vehicles after they were reportedly shot by government troops as they were fleeing combat.

Photos of the aftermath of the Christmas Eve killings in Mo So village, just outside Hpruso township in Kayah state, spread on social media in the country, fueling outrage against the military that took power in February after ousting the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi.

The accounts could not be independently verified. The photos showed the charred bodies of over 30 people in three burned-out vehicles. On Sunday, the U.S. Embassy in Myanmar said it was appalled by the "barbaric attack in Kayah state that killed at least 35 civilians, including women and children."

"We will continue to press for accountability for the perpetrators of the ongoing campaign of violence against the people of Burma," it said in a statement. Save the Children said it was suspending operations in the region.

A villager who said he went



In this photo provided by the Karenni Nationalities Defense Force (KNDF), smokes and flames billow from vehicles in Hpruso township, Kayah state, Myanmar, Friday, Dec. 24, 2021.

Associated Press

to the scene told The Associated Press that the victims had fled the fighting between armed resistance groups and Myanmar's army near Koi Ngan village, which is just beside Mo So, on Friday. He said they were killed after they were arrested by troops while heading to refugee camps in the western part of the township.

Save the Children said that two of its staff who were traveling home for the holidays after conducting humanitarian response work in a nearby community were "caught up in the incident and remain missing."

"We have confirmation

that their private vehicle was attacked and burned out," the group added in a statement.

"The military reportedly forced people from their cars, arrested some, killed others and burned their bodies."

The government has not commented on the allegations, but a report in the state-run Myanmar Alinn daily newspaper on Saturday said that the fighting near Mo So broke out on Friday when members of ethnic guerrilla forces, known as the Karenni National Progressive Party, and those opposed to the military drove in "suspicious

vehicles and attacked security forces after refusing to stop.

The newspaper report said they included new members who were going to attend training to fight the army, and that the seven vehicles they were traveling in were destroyed in a fire. It gave no further details about the killings.

The witness told the AP the remains were burned beyond recognition, and children's and women's clothes were found together with medical supplies and food. "The bodies were tied with ropes before being set on fire," said the witness, who spoke on condition of ano-

nymity because he feared for his safety.

He did not see the moment they were killed, but said he believed some of them were Mo So villagers who reportedly got arrested by troops on Friday. He denied that those captured were members of locally organized militia groups.

Myanmar's independent media reported on Friday that 10 Mo So villagers including children were arrested by the army. The media said that four members of the local paramilitary Border Guard Forces who went to negotiate for their release were reportedly tied up and shot in the head by the military.

The witness said the villagers and anti-government militia groups left the bodies as military troops arrived near Mo So while the bodies were being prepared for cremation.

"It's a heinous crime and the worst incident during Christmas. We strongly condemn that massacre as a crime against humanity," said Banyar Khun Aung, director of the Karenni Human Rights Group.

Earlier this month, government troops were also accused of rounding up villagers, some believed to be children, tying them up and slaughtering them. An opposition leader, Dr. Sasa, who uses only one name, said the civilians were burned alive. □



Police officers inspect the scene of a bomb explosion in Beni, eastern Congo, Sunday, Dec. 26, 2021.

Associated Press

By AL-HADJI KUDRA MALIRO

Associated Press

BENI, Congo (AP) — Authorities in eastern Congo announced an evening

curfew and new security checkpoints Sunday, fearing more violence after a suicide bomber killed five people in the first attack of

After suicide bombing, Congo officials fear more attacks

its kind in the region.

Beni Mayor Narcisse Muteba, a police colonel, warned hotels, churches and bars in the town of Beni that they needed to add security guards with metal detectors because "terrorists" could strike again.

"We are asking people to be vigilant and to avoid public places during this festive period," Muteba told The Associated Press on Sunday.

Brig. Gen. Constant Ndima, the military governor of North Kivu province, said

there will be a 7 p.m. curfew, as well as more road checkpoints.

Officials initially said the death toll was six plus the suicide bomber, but they revised that figure a day later to five victims. Thirteen others remained hospitalized after the blast at the entrance to the Inbox restaurant on Christmas Day. Saturday's bloodshed dramatically deepened fears that Islamic extremism has taken hold in Beni. The town already has suffered years of attacks by rebels

from the Allied Democratic Forces, or ADF, who trace their origins to neighboring Uganda.

Officials have blamed the latest attack on those rebels, whose exact links to international extremist groups have been murky. The Islamic State's Central Africa Province has claimed responsibility for attacks blamed on ADF, but it is unknown what role exactly the larger organization may have played in organizing and financing the attacks. □



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Desmond Tutu, South Africa's foe of apartheid, dies at 90

By **ANDREW MELDRUM**

Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — Desmond Tutu, South Africa's Nobel Peace Prize-winning icon, an uncompromising foe of apartheid and a modern-day activist for racial justice and LGBT rights, died Sunday at 90. South Africans, world leaders and people around the globe mourned the death of the man viewed as the country's moral conscience. Tutu worked passionately, tirelessly and non-violently to tear down apartheid — South Africa's brutal, decades-long regime of oppression against its Black majority that ended in 1994.

The buoyant, blunt-spoken clergyman used his pulpit as the first Black bishop of Johannesburg and later as the Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, as well as frequent public demonstrations, to galvanize public opinion against racial inequity, both at home and globally. Nicknamed "the Arch," the diminutive Tutu became a towering figure in his nation's history, comparable to fellow Nobel laureate Nelson Mandela, a prisoner during white rule who became South Africa's first Black president. Tutu and Mandela shared a commitment to building a better, more equal South Africa. Tutu's death on Sunday "is another chapter of bereavement in our nation's farewell to a

generation of outstanding South Africans who have bequeathed us a liberated South Africa," South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said. Tutu died peacefully at the Oasis Frail Care Center in Cape Town, his trust said. He had been hospitalized several times since 2015 after being diagnosed with prostate cancer in 1997.

"He turned his own misfortune into a teaching opportunity to raise awareness and reduce the suffering of others," said the Tutu trust. Former U.S. President Barack Obama hailed Tutu as "a moral compass for me and so many others. A universal spirit, Archbishop Tutu was grounded in the struggle for liberation and justice in his own country, but also concerned with injustice everywhere. He never lost his impish sense of humor and willingness to find humanity in his adversaries." A seven-day mourning period is planned in Cape Town before Tutu's burial, including a two-day lying in state, an ecumenical service and an Anglican requiem mass at St. George's Cathedral in Cape Town. The southern city's landmark Table Mountain will be lit up in purple, the color of the robes Tutu wore as archbishop.

Throughout the 1980s — when South Africa was gripped by anti-apartheid violence and a state of emergency gave police

and the military sweeping powers — Tutu was one of the most prominent Black leaders able to speak out against abuses.

A lively wit lightened Tutu's hard-hitting messages and warmed otherwise grim protests, funerals and marches. Plucky and tenacious, he was a formidable force with a canny talent for quoting apt scriptures to harness support for change. The Nobel Peace Prize in 1984 highlighted his stature as one of the world's most effective champions for human rights.

With the end of apartheid and South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994, Tutu celebrated the country's multi-racial society, calling it a "rainbow nation," a phrase that captured the heady optimism of the moment.

Tutu also campaigned internationally for human rights, especially LGBTQ rights and same-sex marriage. "I would not worship a God who is homophobic," he said in 2013, launching a campaign for LGBTQ rights in Cape Town. "I would refuse to go to a homophobic heaven. No, I would say, 'Sorry, I would much rather go to the other place.'" Tutu grew disillusioned with the African National Congress, the anti-apartheid movement that became the ruling party after South Africa's 1994 election.

Tutu was particularly in-



Desmond Tutu, Archbishop and Nobel Peace Prize laureate, shows an Aids shirt while delivering his speech during the 61st World Health Organization (WHO) annual assembly at the European headquarters of the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, Tuesday, May 20, 2008.

Associated Press

censed by the South African government's refusal to grant a visa to the Dalai Lama, preventing the Tibetan spiritual leader from attending Tutu's 80th birthday as well as a planned gathering of Nobel laureates in Cape Town. The government rejected Tutu's accusations that it was bowing to pressure from China, a major trading partner.

Desmond Mpilo Tutu was born Oct. 7, 1931, in Klerksdorp, west of Johannesburg, and became a teacher before entering St. Peter's Theological College in Rosetenville in 1958. He was ordained in 1961 and six years later became chaplain at the University of Fort Hare.

He became bishop of Lesotho, chairman of the South African Council of Churches and, in 1985, the first Black Anglican bishop of

Johannesburg. In 1986, Tutu was named the first Black archbishop of Cape Town. As head of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Tutu and his panel listened to harrowing testimony about torture, killings and other atrocities during apartheid. At some hearings, Tutu wept openly. The commission's 1998 report lay most of the blame on the forces of apartheid, but also found the African National Congress guilty of human rights violations. The ANC sued to block the document's release, earning a rebuke from Tutu. "I didn't struggle in order to remove one set of those who thought they were tin gods to replace them with others who are tempted to think they are," Tutu said. Tutu is survived by his wife of 66 years, Leah, and their four children. □

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This in part is to comply with the updated December 6, CDC requirement for travel to the United States, where all air passengers, regardless of vaccination status, must show a negative COVID-19 test taken no more than 1 day before travel to the United States.

MedCare Fit2Fly Testing Center at the Cove Mall is opposite the Holiday Inn and is open every day for walk-ins from 8 AM through 6 PM. MedCare's other location is situated at The Courtyard by Marriott Aruba Resort, is across the street from the RIU Hotel and is open every day from 8:00 AM until 2 PM. These two locations are at a stone's throw from your resort, condominium, or other vacation accommodation. Walk-ins are welcome.

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Please contact your front desk for more information on our Testing Centers at these properties.

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Harbour House Aruba officially open! 80 % sold, construction in final phase: Harbour House Aruba is ready for you!

ORANJESTAD — It was the official Grand Opening of Harbour House Aruba last Thursday, June 10th. The residence consisting of 94 units is located in the former Mar Azul building, right in the heart of Oranjestad. The two brothers Irwin J. Perret-Gentil and Alberto Perret-Gentil from PERING, one of the largest, privately-owned Real Estate and construction firms in Venezuela and Aruba, officially opened their new jewel in the presence of the invitees.

Harbour House Aruba is the ultimate smart investment or personal living space. A state-of-the-art lobby, an ocean-view gym, bar service, rooftop with 360 degrees view of Oranjestad, on-site parking, 24-hours security and a top floor lounge area with Jacuzzi's. Cherry on the cake: an infinity pool with a panorama on the harbour.

Harbour House Aruba offers cosmopolitan living in a beach-chic environment. The residence is fast-selling their studios, two-bedroom and three-bedroom units for many reasons but in a nutshell we can name: great location, great value for your money and great quality. To see exactly what still is available you may check the website which shows you a map with sold and open units. Updates on construction are also on forehand. When you live abroad stopping by to check upon your purchase is not that simple, yet with the monthly updates on their website, it is a lot easier.

Hottest condo in town

Aruba Today talked to one of the owners from New York: "This is going to be the hottest condo building on the island because this is the very first thing people see when they arrive here by cruise ship and it is the only one combining the ocean, port and city. We feel so happy to be the owner here, also, the organization is amazing. We are being accommodated in every way, the attention you get is extraordinary."

Boardwalk

Living here includes being part of Oranjestad and all its benefits. Around the Harbour House building a

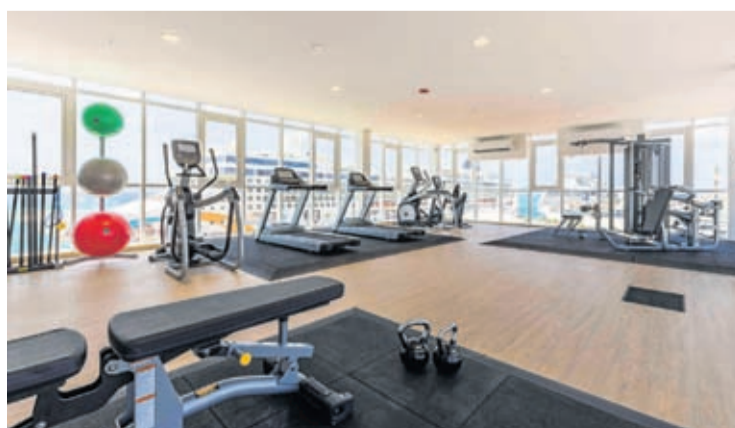
boardwalk is constructed allowing you to stroll along the waterfront and enjoy a drink on a terrace or dive into the art gallery, souvenir store or even have dinner facing the atmospheric harbour of Oranjestad.

The process of purchase is easy, whether you are abroad or on the island. Make an appointment through the website to visit the sales office when you are here. In that way you can actually see the unit, materials and amenities. If you are



not on the island the website can help you out and the sales office is happy to send you all needed documentation for you to orientate. When agreed upon the unit you sign an agreement and move forward with the down payment which is \$ 50.000. At receipt of that amount the sales is closed and the price will not change. You know what you get and will not be surprised by price changes. The payment agreements after the deposit will be discussed and are flexible. Harbour House Aruba assist also in financing by banks.

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Operational report 2020 and condensed financial statements 2020: The Centrale Bank of Aruba maintains its solid financial position during Covid-19 pandemic

ORANJESTAD – The Centrale Bank van Aruba (CBA) today publishes its Operational Report 2020 and its Condensed Financial Statements 2020. These reports provide a synopsis of CBA's financial results for 2020, summarize the most important achievements related to its strategic plan "Bela yen: Nos Plan Strategico 2016-2020", and highlights the main developments and activities in the monetary sector, the payment systems, along with the prime operational activities carried out by the CBA in 2020.



main focus areas was to ensure at all times an adequate level of foreign exchange reserves to safeguard the fixed value of the florin vis a vis the U.S. dollar. This in view of the strong contraction in foreign currency inflows from tourism

activities, resulting from the measures the Government of Aruba (GOA) had to take to contain the spread of the Covid-19 virus. The CBA, on its turn, took various measures in the monetary, prudential, and foreign exchange areas.

In 2020, one of the CBA's

These measures, further fortified by substantial foreign borrowing of the GOA, including from The Netherlands, mitigated the negative impact on the foreign exchange reserve. These reserves were appropriate throughout 2020, while the liquidity of the banking system also remained adequate, including other important prudential ratios, thereby contributing to the stability of the financial sector and maintaining the confidence in the Aruban florin. In view hereof, as well as the strong rebound in the tourism sector and positive economic outlook, as of September 1, 2021, the CBA revoked all foreign exchange restrictions imposed, as well as the prudential relief measures for the commercial banks. In addition, as of September 2021, in view of the high level of excess liquidity in the banking sector and rising inflation pressures, the CBA tightened monetary policy by gradually raising the reserve requirement rate for the commercial banks, which reached the level of 12 percent as of December 1, 2021.

security, and information system. In particular, a key achievement in 2020, was the launching of the Instant Payment Clearing and Settlement Mechanism, also known as I-Pago, in close collaboration with the commercial banks. Thanks to this new platform, the clearing and settlement of local transfers between commercial banks was reduced from several days to a couple of seconds. The I-Pago system is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. This was an important milestone especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, where contactless payment became essential in the local retail industry.

By significantly reducing expenditures through strict budgetary measures, the financial position of the CBA remained solid throughout 2020, generating a net profit of Afl. 28.4 million. The net interest revenues, CBA's primary source of revenue fell markedly in 2020, reflecting the negative interest rate developments in the U.S. financial markets due to the Covid-19 pandemic and Fed's subsequent anticipating measures. Personnel and operating expenses of the CBA contracted due to more stringent cost control. The CBA would like to thank all its stakeholders for the cooperation received during 2020 and 2021, and wishes the entire Aruba community a happy and healthy 2022.

The year 2020 also marked the end of CBA's strategic plan "Bela Yen: Nos Plan Strategico 2016 – 2020". During that period, the CBA focused on becoming a prominent central bank in the region, by executing its tasks in an efficient and result-oriented manner, while being an attractive organization for top-talents. The CBA completed various strategic initiatives in the areas of payment systems, corporate governance, supervision, information

The Operational Report 2020 and the Condensed Financial Statements 2020 are available on CBA's website as of today. □

Nebraska project finds key minerals, but can it mine them?

By JOSH FUNK

Associated Press

ELK CREEK, Neb. (AP) — Far beneath the rolling cropland of southeast Nebraska sits a deposit of elements that can be used to make steel and aluminum stronger. Extracting them would seem to be just the kind of project that President Joe Biden has argued is needed to reduce the United States' dependence on foreign suppliers of critical minerals. But a proposed mine to recover the minerals — niobium, scandium and titanium — is instead providing a case study in the difficulty of actually launching such projects in the U.S. The challenges start with the massive amount of money needed to build a mine but also include fickle customers, the nation's tougher environmental regulations, volatile markets and intense international competition. As a result, despite years of efforts, the mine in Nebraska might never be built.

"People can spend their careers — all of their life — working for a mining company and never produce an ounce of metal," said analyst David Abraham, who wrote a book about mining rare earth elements. Without a doubt, money is the biggest hurdle to mining company NioCorp's plans to build a mine about 80 miles (130 kilometers) south of Omaha. The company estimates it needs about \$1 billion and so far, it hasn't secured enough major investors and the federal government hasn't shown much willingness to share that cost.

The U.S. is dependent on imports for the 35 substances it currently designates as critical minerals, including niobium, scandium and titanium. The U.S. relies entirely on imports for 14, and foreign producers provide more than half the supply of another 14 substances, led by China.

Recently, tight supplies caused prices to soar for the critical elements used in lightweight magnets for electric vehicles and other high-tech products. In 2011,



NioCorp Corporate Controller Jeff Mason shows investors a rock sample while the company's CEO Mark Smith listens, Oct. 6, 2021 in Elk Creek, Neb.

new export restrictions by China caused abrupt shortages of 17 rare earth elements. Niobium is mixed with steel to make the alloy stronger, lighter and more heat and corrosion resistant. It is used in bridges, oil rigs, pipelines and jet engines. Most of the U.S. supply comes from open pit mines in Brazil. The U.S. has never had a significant shortage, but the government is concerned enough that it keeps a supply in its national defense stockpile. Scandium can make aluminum stronger, is used in some specialized lasers, and would be used more widely if greater supplies were available. Most comes from China, with smaller amounts produced in the Philippines, Russia, Canada and Kazakhstan. The titanium that NioCorp hopes to produce would primarily be used in paint

production. Unlike niobium and scandium, there are a few U.S. mines, but more than half the titanium is imported from China and other countries.

Company officials say tests have found some of the most sought-after elements at the Nebraska site, but it's not clear yet whether there's enough to be commercially viable.

Even if NioCorp can come up with the money for its mine, its profitability could hinge on whether its minerals will be cheaper than foreign competitors' supplies. "Simply knowing the existence of a mineral deposit that's attractive geologically does not guarantee commercial viability," said professor Rod Eggert, deputy director of the Critical Materials Institute at the Colorado School of Mines. NioCorp has been actively exploring the site for seven

years, drilling out samples from as deep as 3,000 feet (900 meters) below the surface. The company raised \$6.2 million earlier this year to buy the land, and since 2015 has raised roughly \$60 million. Nearly half of NioCorp's 6,400 shareholders live in Nebraska not far from the project. The proposal has received the key state and federal environmental permits it would need. But the Nebraska project is one of dozens of critical minerals projects worldwide at various stages of development, competing for investors.

"I can assure you that as the largest shareholder of this company, there is nothing more that I want done faster than financing, and we're working our tails off to get it done," said NioCorp CEO Mark Smith, who holds more than 19 million shares and has loaned the com-

pany more than \$2 million of his own money.

The Biden administration made rare earth elements a focus of its supply chain review earlier this year and is investigating the national security implications of relying so heavily on imports. A task force is planned to identify U.S. sites for production.

The new \$1 trillion infrastructure plan that provides incentives for electrical vehicles and wind power is expected to boost demand for critical minerals.

"It always helps when the public sees that the government has an interest in these areas," NioCorp's Smith said. "But I've been in this business for an awful long time — over 40 years — and I think it may be time for us to quit studying these issues and start doing something about the issues." □

Associated Press

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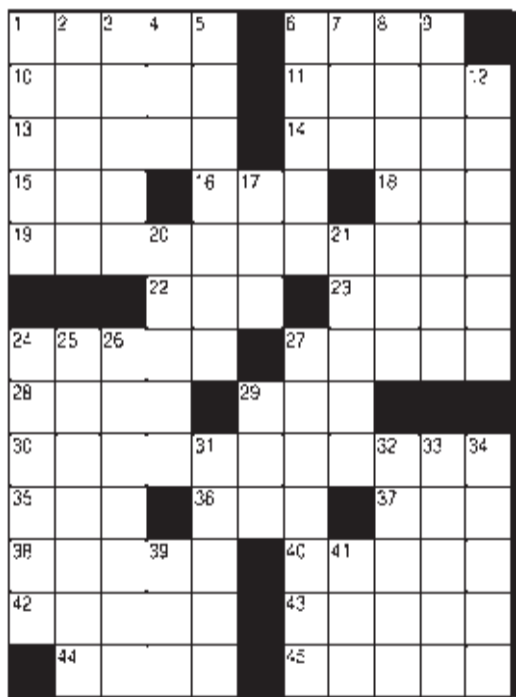
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 40 Green shade
 42 Kick off



Saturday's answer

- 20 Sports 27 Colleges
 venue 29 Money
 21 Select machine
 group 31 Walls
 24 Haunted 32 "—
 house Ike"
 hanging 33 Witch
 25 Away group
 from the 34 Bring
 mouth to
 26 Like bear
 most 39 Brief
 prom drop
 goes 41 Pool unit



12-27

A XYDLBAAXR
 is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's. X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

12-27

CRYPTOQUOTE

HRNIPR FYN YXCR UN GQZR

VNU'G GYQUW. GYR ZNIR ENA

GYQUW. GYR ZNIR GQZR ENA

YXCR. — YRUIE SNIV

Saturday's Cryptoquote: WE WISH FOR ALL A HEARTFELT HOLIDAY SEASON WITH PEACE AND PROSPERITY IN A HEALTHY NEW YEAR. — YOUR PUZZLE FRIENDS

'Spider-Man' surpasses \$1B globally in second weekend



This image released by Sony Pictures shows Tom Holland, left, and Benedict Cumberbatch in Columbia Pictures' "Spider-Man: No Way Home."

By LINDSEY BAHR
 AP Film Writer

Peter Parker's good fortune continued over the holiday weekend as Hollywood prepares to close the books on a turbulent 2021. Even with some mighty competition from new Matrix and Sing movies, and rising concerns over the omicron variant, "Spider-Man: No Way Home" stayed in the No. 1 spot and netted a few more milestones too including crossing the \$1 billion mark globally.

According to studio estimates Sunday "Spider-Man" added \$81.5 million over the three-day weekend, down 69% from its first weekend. The Sony and Marvel film has now grossed \$467 million from North American theaters, more than doubling the domestic grosses of 2021's previous No. 1 film, "Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings."

With \$587.1 million from 61 overseas markets, in just 12 days of release, "Spider-Man" has grossed \$1.05 billion globally. It's the first film of the pandemic to cross \$1 billion and is tied with "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" for being the third-fastest film ever to do so — and this without the benefit of

Associated Press

its release in China.

Universal's "Sing 2" came in second place with an estimated \$23.8 million, while Warner Bros.' "The Matrix Resurrections" grossed \$12 million to take third place. The animated musical "Sing 2" features high-profile celebrity talent including Matthew McConaughey, Scarlett Johansson, Reese Witherspoon and Bono, as well as a jukebox soundtrack full of well-known hits. Since its release Wednesday, it's made \$41 million (\$1.6 million of that came from Thanksgiving weekend showings) from North America and \$65 million worldwide.

Orr said the stellar CinemaScore (A+) and audience scores suggest that the film will continue to perform well in the next few weeks, when many kids are still out of school for the holidays.

The fourth Matrix also opened on Wednesday and has earned an estimated \$22.5 million in its first five days in North America. The film, directed by Lana Wachowski and starring Keanu Reeves and Carrie-Anne Moss, is currently streaming on HBO Max as well. Globally, it's grossed \$69.8 million to date.

While the studio was hoping for a stronger box office, Jeff Goldstein, Warner Bros.' head of domestic distribution, said the movie achieved what they were looking for as an overall strategy including HBO Max.

"The Matrix Resurrections" is the last of the 18 Warner Bros. films released in 2021 to debut both in theaters and on HBO Max simultaneously. Starting in 2022, the studio will have a 45-day exclusive theatrical window on their films.

In fourth place was Disney and 20th Century's "The King's Man," a prequel to the action-comedy Kingsman series starring Ralph Fiennes. It came in slightly under expectations with \$6.4 million from the weekend and \$10 million from its first five days. The audience skewed heavily male (65%). The Kurt Warner biopic "American Underdog" opened on Christmas Day and has made an estimated \$6.2 million in its two days in release to round out the top five. Zachary Levi stars as Warner, the quarterback who went from undrafted free agent to Hall of Famer.

Paul Thomas Anderson's "Licorice Pizza" expanded nationwide on Christmas, after playing in limited release for a month, and added \$2.3 million bringing its total to \$3.7 million. And right behind it was the Denzel Washington-directed drama "A Journal For Jordan," which to \$2.2 million. With just a few days left in 2021, the North American box office is currently sitting at \$4.3 billion and is likely to net out around \$4.4 billion. Pre-pandemic, it was normal for a year's box office to surpass \$11 billion.

"To say was a roller-coaster year is an understatement," said Paul Dergarabedian, the senior media analyst for Comscore, Inc. "The marketplace is still facing challenges from the pandemic, but what an amazing capper to one of the most incredible years ever at the box office." □

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Russian court slaps Google, Meta with massive fines



Facebook employees take a photo with the company's new name and logo outside its headquarters in Menlo Park, Calif., on Oct. 28, 2021.

By **ULIANA PAVLOVA**

Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — A Moscow court on Friday slapped Google with a nearly \$100 million fine and also fined Facebook's parent company Meta \$27 million over their failure to delete content banned by local law, as Russia seeks to step up pressure on technology giants.

The Tagansky District Court ruled that Google repeatedly neglected to remove the banned content, and ordered the company to pay an administrative fine of about 7.2 billion rubles (about \$98.4 million). Google said it would study the court documents before deciding on its next steps.

Later Friday, the court also slapped a fine of nearly 2 billion rubles (\$27.2 million) on Meta for failure to remove banned content. Russian courts had previ-

ously imposed smaller fines on Google, Facebook and Twitter this year, and Friday's rulings marked the first time the size of the fine was calculated based on revenue.

Russian state communications watchdog Roskomnadzor said Google and Meta were specifically accused of violating the ban on distributing content that promotes extremist ideology, insults religious beliefs and encourages dangerous behavior by minors, among other things.

The agency said that Facebook and Instagram have failed to remove 2,000 items despite the courts' requests to do so, while Google has failed to delete 2,600 such items. It warned that they may

face more revenue-based fines for failure to delete the banned content. Russian authorities have steadily ramped up pressure on social media platforms, accusing them of failing to purge content related to drug abuse, weapons and explosives and extremist views.

Earlier this year, authorities criticized tech companies for not deleting announcements about unsanctioned protests in support of jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Naval-

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ny. Russian authorities also have demanded that foreign tech giants store the personal data of Russian citizens on servers in Russia, threatening them with fines or possible bans if they fail to comply.

Alexander Khinshtein, head of the committee on information policies in the lower house of Russian parliament, said the massive fine should send a clear message to all IT giants. □



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NHL to bring back taxi squads in effort to keep season going

By **STEPHEN WHYNO** and **JOHN WAWROW**
AP Hockey Writers

The NHL will emerge from an extended holiday break with taxi squads and other roster revisions to guard against more disruptions to the season.

Each team will be allowed to have a taxi squad of up to six players and to make emergency recalls from the minors if COVID-19 absences would cause anyone to play without a full lineup. Taxi squads, which were used during the shortened 2021 season, are set to be in effect until at least the All-Star break in early February.

Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly confirmed the new roster rules in an email to The Associated Press on Sunday. They were first reported by Sportsnet.

Under the new provisions, any team shy of having 12 forwards, six defensemen and two goaltenders available can bring up a player from the American Hockey League without playing a game with fewer than



Vegas Golden Knights right wing Reilly Smith (19) crashes to the ice after being tripped by Tampa Bay Lightning goaltender Andrei Vasilevskiy (88) during the second period of an NHL hockey game Tuesday, Dec. 21, 2021, in Las Vegas.

the usual 18 skaters. Emergency recalls also can be made of players with salary-cap hits of up to \$1 million, an increase from the previous \$850,000 limit.

Players on the taxi squad will count as being in the minors for cap purposes. They can be there for a

maximum of 20 days. The goal of the changes is to keep the NHL season going after 64 games already have been postponed for coronavirus-related reasons. All 14 games initially scheduled for Monday previously were postponed to allow for analyzing of COV-

ID-19 tests taken Sunday by players, coaches and staff upon returning to team facilities.

The return to team facilities also brought the predictable result of additions to the COVID-19 protocol list across the league.

The defending Stanley

Associated Press

Cup champion Tampa Bay Lightning added goaltenders Andrei Vasilevskiy and Brian Elliott, defenseman Mikhail Sergachev, forward Pierre-Edouard Bellemare and assistant coach Rob Zetter to the list. Dallas Stars defenseman Miro Heiskanen, forwards Jason Robertson, Joel Kiviranta, Radek Faksa and Michael Raffl, Philadelphia Flyers defenseman Ryan Ellis and Buffalo Sabres forwards Dylan Cozens and Mark Jankowski and coach Don Granato also entered protocol.

The Sabres said Cozens, Jankowski and Granato were asymptomatic. The team canceled a scheduled practice, which was to be Buffalo's first since Dec. 18.

The NHL began its annual Christmas break a day earlier than anticipated last week amid a rapid increase of positive COVID-19 test results among players. At the time, more than a quarter of the league's 32 teams were shut down because of outbreaks. □

NBA virus numbers still rising, expanded testing begins



Golden State Warriors forward Draymond Green (23) dribbles the ball up the court against the Memphis Grizzlies during the first half of an NBA basketball game in San Francisco, Thursday, Dec. 23, 2021.

Associated Press

By **TIM REYNOLDS**
AP Basketball Writer

Here's what the Orlando Magic injury report looked like on Sunday: Six players out because of virus-related problems, another sidelined while he completes the process of getting cleared from a protocols stint, and another six players out with injuries.

Yes, that's 13 players —

from one team.

"You expect the unexpected," Magic coach Jamahl Mosley said.

Such is the norm around the NBA right now, after yet another day of adding more names to the health and safety protocols list. By late afternoon Sunday, the official number of players disclosed by teams as being in the protocols was up

to 111 — the real number, considering some teams had yet to update injury reports, was believed to be slightly higher. And some teams were stuck simply trying to piece rosters together just to try and play. Golden State's Draymond Green was the latest big name added to the protocols list on Sunday, less than 24 hours after the Warriors beat Phoenix in what was the best game on the league's five-game Christmas lineup and probably one of the more anticipated games so far this season.

The numbers may continue to rise, now that the league's expanded testing for players who have not received booster shots started on Sunday and will continue into early January.

"This is the reality of this association right now," Miami coach Erik Spoelstra said.

Toronto played in Cleveland on Sunday with eight

players: four on regular contracts, four signed to hardship deals. The Raptors have 10 players unable to play for virus-related reasons and hadn't played for more than a week.

But the schedule said they were playing Sunday, so they showed up to play on Sunday.

In Chicago, where the Bulls just had 10 players go through protocols and are now without coach Billy Donovan as he navigates them, it had been pointed out that Lonzo Ball was the lone player to appear in every game for the team so far this season.

That streak is about to end: Ball is one of three players on the latest list of Bulls in the protocols.

"Y'all jinxed me," Ball tweeted.

Memphis saw its protocols list grow to five on Sunday. San Antonio — one of the few teams that hadn't had a player in protocols right now — had its run of luck

on that front end when Dejounte Murray was added to the list, and Atlanta added John Collins to its already-jammed list.

"You can only control so many things," Mosley said.

The figure of those in the protocols doesn't even include coaches and staff who are sidelined by virus-related concerns, which almost always means a positive test.

Miami played Orlando on Sunday with assistant coaches Caron Butler and Chris Quinn not on the bench, and head athletic trainer Jay Sabol dealing with protocols as well.

"It's a crazy virus. It really is," Spoelstra said. "It just brings out the worst in people. It can happen. The league, they have to make really tough decisions right now. I don't envy what they're having to do, but organizations are having to make tough decisions daily. Same thing with the players association and staffs. □

Tampa Bay takes NFC South title for 1st time since 2007

By The Associated Press
CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — The Tampa Bay Buccaneers won their first NFC South title since 2007 on Sunday when Tom Brady threw for 232 yards and a touchdown and Antonio Brown made a grand return to the NFL in a 32-6 rout of the Carolina Panthers. In his first game since Oct. 13, Brown saw a prominent role on offense with Mike Evans and Chris Godwin sidelined by injuries, catching 10 passes for 101 yards while being targeted 15 times by Brady. Ronald Jones carried 20 times for 65 yards and a touchdown filling in for the injured Leonard Fournette. Tampa Bay also got big offensive contributions from unheralded players Ke'Shawn Vaughn and Cyril Grayson. Vaughn broke two tackles and rambled for a 55-yard first quarter touchdown. Grayson, a COVID-19 replacement player, hauled in a 62-yard reception to set up Brady's only TD pass, a 4-yarder to Cameron Brate.

The Bucs (11-4) put up 391 yards on offense, and on defense, had seven sacks and limited the Panthers to two field goals. Carolina (5-10) went with a dual-quarterback approach, starting Cam Newton (7 of 13 for 61 yards and ran for 42 yards) and finishing with Sam Darnold, who went 15 of 33 for 190 yards.

RAMS 30, VIKINGS 23
MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Brandon Powell returned a punt 61 yards for a touchdown in the third quarter to lift Los Angeles into the playoffs in its win over Minnesota. The victory also sent the Rams' NFC West rival Arizona Cardinals into the postseason. Sony Michel rushed for a season-high 131 yards and a score for the Rams (11-4), while Matt Gay made three field goals, and the Aaron Donald-led defense did its part, keeping the Vikings out of the end zone on two first-half trips inside the 10-yard line. Matthew Stafford had his first three-interception game since

Sept. 10, 2018, when he was picked off four times for Detroit against the New York Jets. For the Vikings (7-8), Kirk Cousins had 315 yards on 27-for-38 passing with a touchdown to K.J. Osborn with 8:21 remaining that cut the lead to 27-20. But his interception in the end zone in the first quarter loomed large all afternoon.

BILLS 33, PATRIOTS 21
FOXBOROUGH, Mass. (AP) — Josh Allen threw for three touchdowns and Buffalo hung on to beat New England to vault the Bills back into first place in the AFC East title race.

Buffalo (9-6) now holds tie-breakers over the Patriots and Dolphins, and is in the driver's seat to win its second straight division title. Allen finished 30 of 47 passes

for 314 yards, and he also rushed 12 times for 64 yards. Isaiah McKenzie stepped up in place of Bills receivers Cole Beasley and Gabriel Davis, who were both on the reserve/COVID-19 list, notching a career-high 11 catches, 125 yards and a touchdown.

The Patriots (9-6) saw rookie quarterback Mac Jones struggling to find openings against the Bills' top-ranked defense. He went 14 of 32 for 145 yards and two interceptions.

EAGLES 34, GIANTS 10
PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Jalen Hurts threw a touchdown to lineman Lane Johnson, linebacker Alex Singleton returned an interception for a score and Philadelphia continued its late-season playoff push with a win

over New York. The Eagles (8-7) have won six of eight after opening the season losing five of seven and moved into the seventh playoff spot in the NFC. They could clinch a playoff berth with a win and some help next week. Hurts shook off a dismal first half and threw for 199 yards and two touchdowns to push the Eagles over .500 for the first time since they won the season opener. Philadelphia scored 31 points in the second half. Quarterback Jake Fromm got the start with the Giants (4-11) left with little options after Daniel Jones was shut down for the season because of a sprained neck. Fromm went 6 of 17 for 25 yards and one interception before he was pulled for Mike

Glennon late in the third.
BENGALS 41, RAVENS 21
CINCINNATI (AP) — Joe Burrow threw for a franchise-record 525 yards and four touchdowns, and Cincinnati took sole possession of first place in the AFC North by beating a COVID-depleted Baltimore team. Burrow, the second-year QB who broke Boomer Esiason's team record of 522 yards, was 37 of 46 and threw two touchdown passes to Tee Higgins and one each to Tyler Boyd and Joe Mixon as the Bengals (9-6) swept the Ravens for the first time since 2015. Tee Higgins had 12 receptions for a career-high 194 yards. Ja'Marr Chase caught seven for 125 yards, and Boyd had three catches for 85 yards. □

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EAGLE BEACH — Located at Costa Linda Beach Resort between its captivating swimming pool and the amazing world-famous Eagle Beach Aruba, you will find 'Water's Edge Restaurant; a cozy, relaxing & inspiring Aruban restaurant. Serving the most mouthwatering dishes of all over the world to please all your taste buds with its popular and demanding international selection.

If you're looking for a phenomenal dinner experience that has all the ingredients for a wonderful gastronomic night, then you should book at least one night of your stay at Water's Edge Restaurant. Designed to pamper all your senses and cover all of your needs with an amazing staff to attend to your every wish, whether in the fine dining room or under a palapa with your toes in the sand.

Gastronomic journey

Kick start the night with a great, refreshing and most delicious cocktail mixed with concoctions before the grand tour of an extraordinary culinary experience. Start your journey with an exquisite appetizer such as the daily fresh made Water's Edge ceviche or maybe a world known jumbo shrimp cocktail followed by the Chef's special of seafood



such as the Spicy Caribbean Seafood pasta, Mahi Mahi or pan fried Red Snapper served with Aruban creole sauce or garlic lemon butter. For the carnivores among us there are choices of 8 ounce seasoned Filet Mignon, 12 ounce Rib Eye steak or a French Rack of Lamb seasoned and grilled to perfection. With choices of extra sides of fresh asparagus, seasonal vegetables, mashed or baked potatoes, fries or rice and beans. Combine your personal choice with one of the most exclusive wines from the great selection of international wines to compliment your dish. Kids will enjoy every item of the specially compiled kids menu. Vegetarians will enjoy the roasted vegetable pasta tossed in a light butter sauce and topped with freshly shaved parmesan cheese. As desserts the choices are wild. Homemade key lime pie, coconut flan served with caramel sauce and whipped cream or a NY cheese cake, chocolate brownie with chocolate sauce vanilla ice cream and whipped cream or a delicious oven fresh carrot cake served with orange sauce and candied pecans.



Whether it is the best seafood, steaks, chicken, pasta, or your continental favorites the reasonably priced menu offers a modern twist and features generous portions and Chef's specials.

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Live entertainment:

Just about every day of the week, there is a different live entertainment by the best local artists for you to enjoy. On Monday & Saturday, Angela Flores, will delight you with her violin. Tuesday, Jean Paul, Saxophonist, will get you moving.

On Wednesday's and Sunday's singer Paula Ridderstap will make you sing along to all her tunes. Thursday's and Friday's guitarist Ricky Thomas will make you find your groove. And also on Sunday's Tico Kock will make you dance away to the sounds of his steel drum. Whether you're in a romantic mood or more in a swinging mood, there is absolutely a night especially for you. In addition, the best happy hour in Aruba happens right here. Water's Edge Restaurant offers three Happy Hours daily (12 noon – 1 pm, 4 pm – 6 pm, with complimentary hors d'oeuvres served by circulating staff, and again from 9 pm – 10 pm) with all premium brands specially priced.

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